

NSC BRIEFING

12 March 1958

State Dept. review completed

NORTH AFRICA (short)

- I. Latest French move is proposal for Western Mediterranean defense pact to include France, Spain, Italy, UK, Morocco, Tunis and the "Algeria of tomorrow."
 - A. Rabat and Tunis will be suspicious and demand Algerian independence which France will not accept.
 - B. Paris authorized Murphy to state that French government is prepared to concentrate French forces in Tunisia at Bizerte and to evacuate 475,000 to "otherside of the sand dunes" on condition Bourguiba "restores normal relations" by lifting restrictions on troop moves, and permitting French consuls and displaced civilians to return.
 1. But Tunis unlikely to accept long-term French occupation of Bizerte.
 2. Finally, Gaillard still at mercy of ultra-nationalists in cabinet.
 - C. Indications that substantial number in French parliament toying with notion De Gaulle could be answer to French problems.
- II. Bourguiba and King of Morocco reviving Maghreb (North African) Union of Tunisia, Morocco, independent Algeria, and possibly Libya, to combat Nasir influence in area and speed Algerian independence.
- III. Algerian rebel upsurge continues with 400 French troops killed in February.
 - A. French Defense Minister pushing for a border no-mans land 20-25 miles wide and 300 miles long.

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- IV. Paris has decided on 50% reduction of their 40,000 ground troops in Morocco.
 - A. Meanwhile, Rabat likely to demand evacuation of French and Spanish troops.
 - 1. It is unlikely that Rabat will change its favorable attitude toward US presence over at least the short term.
 - B. King's endorsement of nationalist claims in the Sahara has worsened relations with Spain and probably France.
- VI. In Spanish Morocco fighting could break out again in southern border regions with possible involvement of Moroccan troops.
- VI. Outlook for Murphy mission:
 - A. Although Bourguiba's position is not rigid, it is doubtful that he will accede to the present French proposals.
 - B. As indicated, Gaillard may have gone too far (for the ultranationalists) in making these proposals.

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